

## Essex Study Area

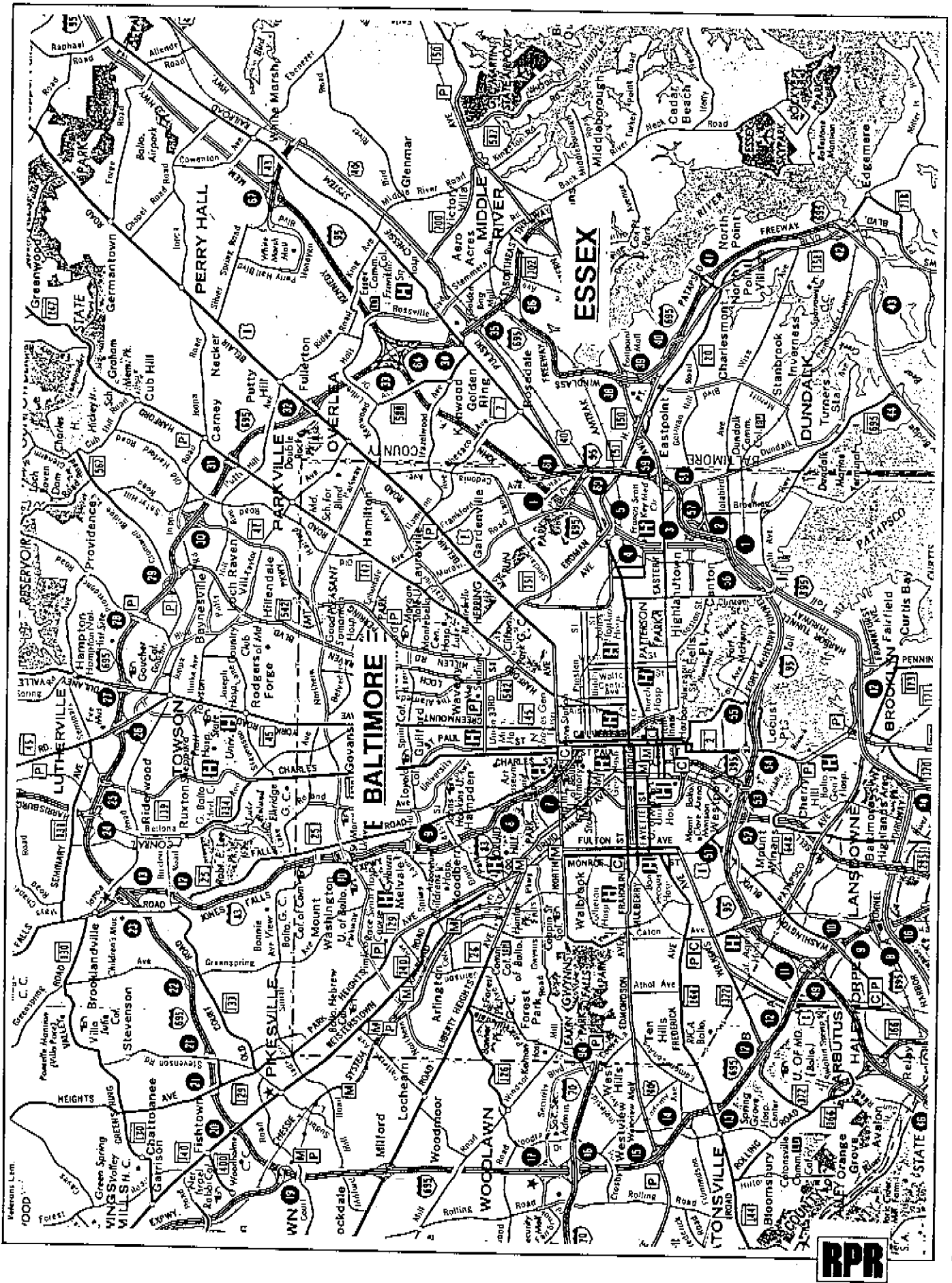
Planning for commercial revitalization of the Essex business core has been on-going since the mid-1970's, although it was not until after 1980 that targeted revitalization and improvement projects were initiated to implement the plans that had been prepared. While the boundaries of the core study area have changed slightly over the years, they remain focused on the concentrated business strip on Eastern Avenue in the heart of Essex. Most market studies in support of revitalization planning have also considered an extended commercial strip along Essex Avenue from the Back River bridge to the vicinity of the Middlesex Shopping Center. The discussion to follow identifies and describes in more detail the study area for this report, and it gives a brief history of planning activity for the commercial revitalization of the CBD.

### Regional Position

The community of Essex, Maryland is situated to the east of the City of Baltimore, in southeastern Baltimore County. The community is centered at the neck of the peninsula (Back River Neck) formed by the backwaters of the Back and Middle rivers and extending into the Chesapeake Bay. It is traversed from southwest to northeast by Eastern Avenue, which crosses both rivers and the peninsula; and from northwest to southeast by Back River Neck Road, which runs perpendicular to Eastern Avenue and extends the length of the peninsula (or neck). These two roads connect Essex and adjacent neighborhoods to the regional highway network, as follows (see Map A):

- o Eastern Avenue provides access to the southeast to the Patapsco and Windlass freeways, which are portions of the Baltimore Beltway system (I-695). It also extends directly to downtown Baltimore to the west, linking with such major thoroughfares as North Point Boulevard and Pulaski Highway, and intersecting the Harbor Tunnel Throughway (I-895).
- o Back River Neck Road intersects Eastern Avenue near the terminus of the Southeast Freeway, which links directly to Pulaski Highway (U.S. Route 40), Philadelphia Highway (Route 7), Interstate Route I-95, and the Beltway (I-695), and heads northwest toward Towson.

The character of Essex is decidedly that of a blue collar, working class community, with a modest maritime flavor due to the proximity to the rivers and the bay. Maritime industries are of little economic significance to the area, however, being limited primarily to pleasure craft repair and marina operation. It is the larger heavy industries that have traditionally given the area its character and livelihood, such as the Bethlehem Steel Sparrows Point plant and the Martin Marietta aircraft plant (now a state airport and industrial park).



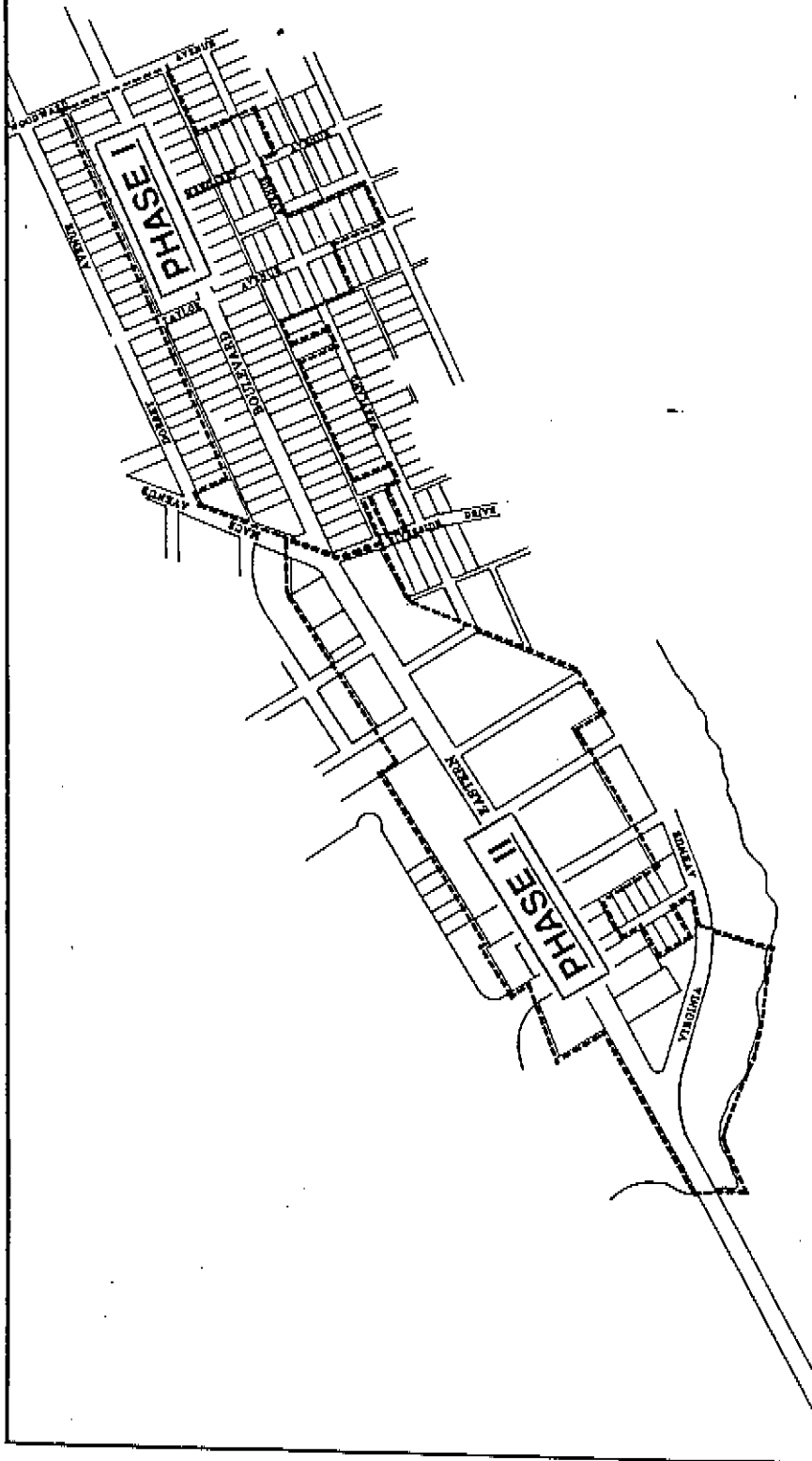
MAP A. Essex CBD Regional Position

### Study Area Boundaries

The Essex business core area for this study is the Central Business District as defined by the 400 and 500 blocks of Eastern Avenue, plus selected adjacent properties. This area has served as the Phase I site for revitalization projects undertaken over the 1980's to implement the 1980 Revitalization Plan for Essex (see below). The primary study area, shown on Map B, extends from Mace Avenue and Riverside Avenue on the west to Woodward Avenue on the east.

On the north side of Eastern Avenue the study area includes only the first line of properties, extending to the rear alley. On the south side, however, the study area extends across the rear alley to include several properties fronting on Maryland Avenue. These extensions provide inclusion into the study area of those parking lots and commercial structures in the CBD that do not front on Eastern Avenue. Cross streets in the study area include Taylor Avenue and Margaret Avenue. The major assignment of this report is to evaluate the current status and remaining potentials for revitalization in this core area, and to recommend next steps to further the improvements to the area.

Also covered in this report is an extended study area consisting of the Eastern Avenue frontages west of Mace and Riverside avenues to the Back River bridge. This is a less intensely developed commercial strip that will become the locus of additional improvements for revitalization, if warranted and as recommended (Phase II). Future studies and revitalization activities are expected to take place to the east of the downtown, along Eastern Avenue from Woodward to the vicinity of Marlyn Avenue and the Middlesex Shopping Center (Phase III).



ESSEX COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION

ESSEX, MARYLAND

